

Statement of Representative Ron Kind (WI-3)
before the House Committee on Natural Resources
Members' Day Hearing
June 4, 2019

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Republican Bishop, and distinguished Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony before you today.

Members' Day hearings provide a chance for Members with legitimate interests on a Committee to air them, even when they don't sit on that Committee. But besides parochial problems, they can also help show the extent to which a proposed solution already enjoys a broad Congressional consensus.

My testimony today is that H.R. 1225, the *Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act*, is legislation which meets both those criteria. H.R. 1225 has 228 cosponsors and is thoroughly bipartisan. There is no other bill before this Committee which enjoys the same support, and arguably there is no more pressing issue in the Committee's jurisdiction than fixing the massive maintenance backlog on our public lands.

Though I don't sit on the Natural Resources Committee, I am the founder and co-chair of the National Parks Caucus, and national parks issues hit close to home. The total deferred maintenance backlog in my state of Wisconsin stands at \$8.7 millions. We see over 500,000 visitors to our national parks sites, including the Apostle Island National Lakeshore, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and the Ice Age Historic Trail among others. And visitors spend \$56.3 million in local Wisconsin communities, supporting business, providing good paying jobs and expanding our tax base. If trails, roads, campgrounds, and other facilities are continually closed due to repairs, tourism is harmed. Hotels, restaurants, and other vendors rely on functioning parks for revenue.

My concern isn't just local, though. The overall national backlog stands at \$16 billion for the Department of the Interior, and over \$20 billion when the Forest Service is included. This is a ballooning problem for the federal budget, and it often puts the legal obligation of multiple-use in serious jeopardy. I support H.R. 1225's forward-thinking funding mechanism, which would pare down the backlog by providing funding for high-priority maintenance by making use of conventional and renewable energy revenues. It's a 5-year down payment that's long overdue.

Thank you once again for allowing me to testify and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.